



# Measure Up

Assessment news for eighth-grade teachers

Fall 2006 • Winter 2007



## Did you know?

- In 1969, the first NAEP assessment was given to 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students in citizenship, science, and writing.
- In 1996, NAEP implemented a change in procedures to increase the inclusion of students with disabilities and English language learners.
- In 2007, a sample of eighth-graders nationwide will take the reading, mathematics, or writing assessment.

## Questions for Teachers, Principals, and Students

**As a part of each NAEP assessment, eighth-grade teachers of sampled students are asked to fill out a questionnaire on a variety of topics. In 2007, this questionnaire will ask teachers about their background, education, training, and instructional practices. Teachers will be asked about their years of teaching experience, college major and minor courses of study, and professional development activities.**

Additionally, there are subject-specific sections of the questionnaire, which focus on instructional practices such as how many hours per week are spent teaching each subject, the availability and use of calculators in mathematics class, and the organization of language arts class.

The information gathered from the Teacher Questionnaire will be linked with the student scores and will produce valuable contextual data available for analysis on the NAEP Data Explorer at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde>. Using data collected from the Teacher Questionnaires, researchers can study the relationship between teacher experience and education, for instance, and student scores.

In addition to the Teacher Questionnaire, the school principal and students also answer background questions. The school principal provides information about student demographics, how students are grouped into classes, and professional development offerings. The students answer questions on a variety of topics, including their reading and writing practices, the subjects they study in school, the effort they put forth on the assessment, and their parents' highest level of education.

---

### **Sample Teacher Background Question**

*"As part of either your undergraduate or graduate coursework, how many mathematics education courses did you take?"*

---



To see the  
NAEP assessment  
frameworks, visit  
[http://www.nagb.org/  
pubs/pubs.html](http://www.nagb.org/pubs/pubs.html)

## Different Assessments, Different Purposes

**A variety of assessments are used by teachers, parents, students, and policymakers to improve education and evaluate achievement. Quality assessments can help: teachers focus classroom instruction; parents identify their child's strengths and weaknesses; students monitor their own progress; and policymakers evaluate programs. From classroom and unit assessments to national assessments, the results benefit everyone.**

Teacher-directed, or classroom, assessment is necessary to determine the individual progress of students, the quality of the curriculum, and the effectiveness of teaching strategies. The challenging classroom contains a variety of assessment strategies which guarantee that students are evaluated in many ways. The teacher observes students at work, and, using rubrics, evaluates group collaboration, judges presentations, measures responses to discussion questions, and assesses writing, for example.

District and state assessments also play an important role in the assessment cycle.

These assessments are used to evaluate programs and identify areas of curriculum or testing that need improvement. They also provide individual scores for students, schools, and districts.

On the national and state level, The Nation's Report Card, or NAEP, provides performance data for eighth-graders for many subjects based on an assessment framework. It is given throughout the country to a sample of students from each state, which allows NAEP to track national and state scores over time. NAEP measures what students know and are able to do.

	Teacher-directed assessments	District- and State-directed assessments	NAEP
<b>What is the level of reporting?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual student at all grades</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students</li> <li>Classes</li> <li>Schools</li> <li>Districts</li> <li>State at various grades</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>States and certain large urban districts at grades 4 and 8</li> <li>Nation at grade 12</li> </ul>
<b>Who are the audiences for the results?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers</li> <li>Students</li> <li>Parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers</li> <li>Students</li> <li>Parents</li> <li>Administrators</li> <li>Policymakers</li> <li>General public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General public</li> <li>Policymakers</li> <li>School administrators</li> <li>Teachers</li> <li>Researchers</li> </ul>
<b>What can teachers do with the results?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine content mastery for individual students</li> <li>Evaluate effectiveness of teaching strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate program effectiveness</li> <li>Identify areas of curricular strength and weakness</li> <li>Track progress of student groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track the progress of student groups over time</li> <li>Identify achievement gaps between student groups</li> </ul>

# Writing Tasks:

## Narrative, Informative, Persuasive

**In 2007, some sampled eighth-grade students will take the NAEP writing assessment. During this assessment, they will be asked to respond to two prompts, each within 25 minutes.**

The NAEP writing framework, which guides the assessment content, specifies that students must write narratives, informative essays, and persuasive pieces. The 2002 writing assessment included examples of each type of prompt; one of each was released to the public after the assessment. For narrative writing, eighth-grade students were given a prompt

asking them to describe their first day as President of the United States. For informative writing, eighth-grade students responded to a prompt that asked them to select one book they would save for future generations. On the persuasive task, students were asked to make an argument about why their school day should start and end at later times.



### Sample Narrative Prompt

Imagine that you wake up one morning to discover that you have become President of the United States. **Write a story about your first day as President.**

### Sample Informative Prompt

A novel written in the 1950s describes a world where people are not allowed to read books. A small group of people who want to save books memorize them, so that the books won't be forgotten. For example, an old man who has memorized the novel *The Call of the Wild* helps a young boy memorize it by reciting the story to him. In this way, the book is saved for the future. **If you were told that you could save just one book for future generations, which book would you choose? Write an essay in which you discuss which book you would choose to save for future generations and what it is about the book that makes it important to save. Be sure to discuss in detail why the book is important to you and why it would be important to future generations.**

### Sample Persuasive Prompt

Imagine that the article shown below ("Studies Show Students Need To Sleep Late: Night Owls Versus Early Birds") appeared in your local newspaper. **Read the article carefully, then write a letter to your principal arguing for or against the proposition that classes at your school should begin and end much later in the day. Be sure to give detailed reasons to support your argument and make it convincing.**

- To use released eighth-grade items in the classroom, teachers should visit <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard> and select "Sample Questions."
- From there, teachers can select "Search Options" and then a subject and grade 8. A series of questions will appear, and teachers can review the questions, sample student responses, and performance data for students nationwide.

### What is NAEP?

NAEP stands for the National Assessment of Educational Progress. You may know it as The Nation's Report Card. It's the only national assessment that shows what students across the country know and can do in subjects such as reading, mathematics, and writing. It is different from your state assessments because it represents eighth-graders across the country.

### How can I encourage students' participation?

Remind students that NAEP is important. When NAEP results are reported in the news, they influence the public's opinion of the quality of education that we are providing to our students. Encouraging your students to participate and do their best gives them the opportunity to show how well America's students are performing.

### What do I have to do?

Your students will need to be out of class for a little more than 90 minutes to participate in NAEP. You do not have to do anything to prepare for the assessment; you just need to release students from class and encourage them to do their best. Students are selected to represent eighth-graders across your state. They can help show the country how much American and your state's students know and can do.

## If you want to...

**Learn** more about NAEP results

**View** NAEP data for a particular state or contact your NAEP State Coordinator

**Access** specific results for a grade level, subject, jurisdiction, and/or student groups

**Find** information regarding the types of questions used on NAEP assessments or to view subject-specific questions

**Download** a Sample Questions Booklet that contains sample test questions for the upcoming and previous assessments

**Learn** more about how policy is drafted for each NAEP assessment

**Offer** a comment or suggestion on NAEP

## Visit...

The Nation's Report Card at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>

The National Center for Education Statistics at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states>

The NAEP Data Explorer at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nde>

The NAEP Questions Tool at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls>

The National Center for Education Statistics at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/booklets.asp>

The National Assessment Governing Board at <http://www.nagb.org>

The National Center for Education Statistics mailbox at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/contactus.asp>

This publication was prepared for the National Assessment of Educational Progress by Westat under contract (ED-01-0082/0013) to the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

20647.1006.7848040301